

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: ARA/LA/CAR:MYOHN

APPROVED BY: ARA/LA/CAR:TJCHEAVNER

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTIONSECSTATE FROM NASSAU NOV 18:

QUOTE S E C R E T NASSAU 1955

TO ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR BF

SUBJECT: U.S. FACILITIES IN THE BAHAMAS

1. IN REFLECTING UPON OUR MEETINGS (ABOVE SUBJECT) OF LAST WEEK, WITHIN THE USG AND SUBSEQUENTLY WITH THE BRITISH, WHOSE SUCCESS WERE IN LARGE MEASURE A TESTAMENT TO THE EFFORTS OF BILL LUERS, TED HEAVNER AND OUR COLLEAGUES FROM DOD, I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO STAND BACK AND CONSIDER SOME OF THE BROADER AND LONGER RANGE ASPECTS OF WHERE WE ARE AND MAY BE HEADING. IN NO SENSE SHOULD THE FOLLOWING REMARKS BE VIEWED AS DIMINISHING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DETAILED INNOVATIVE PROPOSALS WHICH WERE DISCUSSED. WE CLEARLY NEED TO DO FURTHER HOMEWORK, MUCH OF IT DEPENDENT UPON OUR ASSOCIATES IN DEFENSE. STILL, AFTER ALL THE DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE THEIR ARRANGEMENT INTO A MOSAIC DESIGNED TO MEET OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS WILLHIN NO SENSE BE AXIOMATIC, SELF-APPARENT OR NECESSARILY EASY. THUS THE NEED ON ALL OUR PARTS TO THINK BROADLY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY ABOUT WHERE WE ARE GOING. HEREWITH ARE MY
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INITIAL BUT BY NO MEANS DOGMATICALLY HELD VIEWS.

2. CENTRAL TO OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BRITISH WERE SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) THAT THE FACILITIES, MOST SPECIFICALLY AUTEC, WERE HIGHLY VALUABLE AND SHOULD IF POSSIBLE BE RETAINED,

(B) THAT AN IMPORTANT COROLLARY FROM THE BRITISH POINT OF VIEW IS THAT THEY RETAIN THEIR ACCESS TO AUTEC,

(C) THAT TO ACCOMPLISH THE FOREGOING A TOTAL QUID, ONLY MINIMALLY TO BE MET BY THE UK, WOULD HAVE TO BE SUBSTANTIAL,

(D) THAT THE PACKAGE THE U.S. SIDE DESCRIBED AMOUNTING TO \$150 MILLION IN TANGIBLE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OVER 15 YEARS WITH AN ADDITIONAL \$25 IN FMS CREDIT, PLUS OTHER IMPORTANT ASSETS NOT DIRECTLY TRANSLATABLE INTO EXPLICIT FINANCIAL TERMS WOULD BE VIEWED AS HIGHLY DISAPPOINTING BY THE GCOB,

(E) THAT THE DISAPPOINTMENT WOULD BE RELATED TO A BAHAMIAN EXPECTATION THAT THE U.S. WOULD FINANCE IN TOTAL A PROJECTED GCOB DEFENSE FORCE, THAT FORCE BASED ON UK PLANS, AND FINALLY,

(F) THAT A U.S. REDEPLOYMENT OF THE FACILITIES OUT OF THE BAHAMAS WOULD LEAD TO POLITICAL INSTABILITY THAT WOULD BE CONTRARY TO U.S. INTERESTS.

3. LEAVING ASIDE FOR THE MOMENT BRITISH VESTED INTEREST IN THE U.S. RETAINING ITS AUTEC FACILITY IN THE BAHAMAS, OR BRITISH PRESUMPTUOUSNESS AT HAVING ADVISED THE GCOB TO DEVELOP A FORCE CAPABILITY FOR WHICH THE UK COULD HARDLY HAVE ASSUMED OTHER THAN U.S. FINANCING, THERE ARE CERTAIN BASIC QUESTIONS WHICH REQUIRE ANALYSIS. THESE INCLUDE:

(A) HOW THE U.S. SHOULD VIEW THE ISSUE OF THE IMPLICATIONS ON BAHAMIAN POLITICAL STABILITY OF A POSSIBLE U.S. BASE WITHDRAWAL,

(B) WHETHER IT IS IN THE U.S. INTEREST TO ASSOCIATE ITS QUID DIRECTLY WITH BAHAMIAN DEFENSE FORCE EXPECTATIONS, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY,

(C) WHAT THE U.S. FACILITIES IN THE BAHAMAS ARE GENUINELY WORTH TO US.

4. WITHOUT QUESTION, A POLITICALLY UNSTABLE BAHAMAS,
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GIVEN ITS GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY TO THE U.S., IS A CONDITION MUCH TO BE AVOIDED. BUT IF THERE IS ONE NATION WHICH OUGHT, INDEED WHICH MUST, WANT STABILITY FOR THE BAHAMAS MORE THAN U.S., IT IS THE BAHAMAS ITSELF. CERTAINLY WE CAN AND SHOQLD PROVIDE REASONABLE ASSISTANCE TOWARD THIS END, BUT WE CANNOT WORK OURSELVES INTO A STATE OF MIND WHERE WE FORMULATE OUR POLICY ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT, LIKE A SMALL, SPOILED CHILD, THE BAHAMAS WILL HOLD ITS BREATH UNTIL IT STRANGLES LEST A PARENTAL UNCLE SAM GIVE IT ITS WAY. A MATTER SO FUNDAMENTAL AS POLITICAL STABILITY HAS GOT TO BE THE FIRST CONCERN OF THE BAHAMAS AND ONLY SECONDARILY THAT OF THE U.S. POST-WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT WHILE U.S. ASSISTANCE -- POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, MORAL,

FINANCIAL, MILITARY -- CAN BE OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE IN CONTRIBUTING TO A FRIENDLY NATION'S STABILITY, ABSENT AN INDIGENOUS COMMITMENT TO SUCH AN OBJECTIVE SUCH EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE IS UNLIKELY OVER THE LONG HAUL TO BE EFFECTIVE.

5. IN THE CASE OF THE BAHAMAS THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY, QUITE ASIDE FROM THE ISSUE RELATING TO THE QUID RECEIVED FOR OUR BASE PRESENCE, CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED. AT PRESENT THE COUNTRY IS POLITICALLY STABLE AND ECONOMICALLY FAR BETTER OF THAN MOST IF NOT ALL HER CARIBBEAN NEIGHBORS. BUT THERE ARE SOME POTENTIALLY DISTURBING SIGNS ON THE HORIZON. THE RULING PLP HAS ENUNCIATED A POLICY IN ITS RECENTLY CONCLUDED CONVENTION (SEE NASSAU 1830, 1833, 1846, 1856 AND 1855), WHICH IF IT TURNS OUT TO BE OTHER THAN PRE-ELECTION YEAR RHETORIC COULD POSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS MOST NOTABLY OF AN ECONOMIC NATURE. THE APPARENT (AND ONE MUST EMPHASIZE THE TENTATIVENESS OF THIS EARLY AN ASSESSMENT) EMPHASIS ON AN INCREASED EFFORT TO BAHAMIANIZE THE ECONOMY COULD WELL DISCOURAGE MUCH NEEDED INVESTMENT AND EVEN IMPACT ADVERSELY ON THE HEART OF THE ECONOMY, TOURISM. MOREOVER, NO ONE KNOWS WHERE THE RESOURCES FOR ALL THE PROPOSALS ARE TO COME FROM TO MEET THE PLP PLANS; ALTHOUGH THE PLP CONGRESS MADE NO SECRET OF LINKAGE BETWEEN THE "SUBSTANTIAL COST" OF THE DEFENSE FORCE AND THE "SUBSTANTIAL CONSIDERATION" TO BE ASKED FOR OUR RETENTION OF THE BASES. THERE CERTAINLY NEED BE NO PANIC ON ANYONE'S PART JUST YET, HOWEVER. FAR FROM IT. MOREOVER, IF THE BAHAMAS IS TO PROCEED
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AS A SOVEREIGN STATE TO DEFINE ITS OWN POLICAL AND ECONOMIC DESTINY, OUR ROLE HAS TO BE A MODERATE IF NOT A LOW-PROFILE ONE. CANDOR IN OUR ADVICE AND MODEST CONSTRUCTIVE ASSISTANCE BY ALL MEANS. BUT NOTHING COULD BE CALCULATED TO PREJUDICE ADVERSELY THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RESPONSIBLE BAHAMIAN PERFORMANCE THAN AN ASSUMPTION THAT THE PROBLEM IS ONE WHICH WE MUST OR SHOULD ACCEPT SIGNIFICANT REponsIBILITY FOR SOLVING. THIS I FEAR IS HOW A FULL OR ESSENTIALLY FULL ASSUMPTION OF THE FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROJECTED GCOB DEFENSE FORCE, AS THE BRITISH SUGGEST THE BAHAMIANS EXPECT, MIGHT BE INTERPRETED. AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE I THINK THIS WOULD BE A BAD IDEA.

6. WHETHER FULLY OR PARTLY FINANCED FROM U.S. QUID, HOW DIRECTLY SHOULD OUR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BE TIED TO THE BAHAMIAN DEFENSE FORCE OBJECTIVE? REFLECTING ON OUR DISCUSSIONS OF LAST WEEK, WHICH ASSUMED THE TIE-IN WOULD INEVITABLY BE EXACT, I AM INCREASINGLY OF THE VIEW THAT OUR INTERESTS WOULD BE BETTER SERVED IF WE AVOID SUCH AN EQUATION. MY REASONS ARE FOUR-FOLD: FIRST, AS SUGGESTED IN THE PRECEDING PARAGRAPHS, BAHAMIAN DESIRES FOR A DEFENSE FORCE SHOULD BE DELINEATED IN PART BY A REALISTIC

PROJECTION OF WHAT RESOURCES THE BAHAMAS CAN BRING TO BEAR. FEW THINGS ARE EASIER THAN FILLING UNREALISTIC MILITARY DESIRES IF SOMEONE ELSE PICKS UP THE TAB. SECOND, WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT SORT OF RECEPTIVITY THE FORCE WILL HAVE WITHIN THE BODY POLITIC. THE BAHAMAS IS NOT A NATION WITH A MILITARY TRADITION, NOT ARE ITS PEOPLE NECESSARILY PREDISPOSED TO THE REGIMENTATION REQUIRED BY A MILITARY FORCE. AN EXPANDED COAST GUARD CAPABILITY MAY NOT BE UNREASONABLE AND COULD (WHEN AND IF THE BAHAMIANS DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE CAPABILITY) BE USEFUL FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, PARTICULARLY AS IT EFFECTS THE INCREASED POLICE POTENTIAL IN THE AREA OF DRUG ENFORCEMENT BUT SIZE, PURPOSE AND COMPOSITION OF THE FORCE HAS NOT YET BEEN CLEARLY DEFINED BY THE GOVERNMENT. I WAS NOT PERSUADED THAT THE BRITISH HAD A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR OWN PROPOSALS SO THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THE BAHAMIANS HAVE A BETTER ONE AND EVEN LESS TO CONSIDER IT SACROSANCT. THIRD, THOUGH PROBABLY A REMOTE POSSIBILITY, THE EVENTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A PRAETORIAN GUARD CANNOT BE TOTALLY IGNORED.

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THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN ONE PRESS SPECULATION TO THIS EFFECT (ADMITTEDLY BY A HOSTILE COMMENTATOR). FOURTH, THERE WOULD SURELY BE HOSTILE REACTION BY FLORIDIANS, PARTICULARLY FISHERMEN, TO AN EXPANDED BAHAMAS DEFENSE OR POLICE FORCE WITH CONSEQUENT PRESSURES ON THE FLORIDA DELEGATION IN THE CONGRESS. THE LATTER WOULD CERTAINLY OPPOSE U.S. ASSISTANCE TIED DIRECTLY TO THE FORCE AND OTHER CONGRESSMEN MIGHT ALSO REACT NEGATIVELY CAUSING ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS IF THE AGREEMENT SHOULD REQUIRE SENATE RATIFICATION. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, PLUS ONE OTHER, OUR QUID SHOULD BE PRESENTED ON ITS MERITS AS A GENEROUS RETURN FOR CONTINUED USE OF BAHAMIAN REAL ESTATE FOR OUR FACILITIES WITH THE BAHAMIANS TO APPLY THE QUID AS IT WISHES. THE FINAL POINT SUPPORTING SUCH AN APPROACH IS THAT THE BAHAMIANS HAVEN'T OFFICIALLY ASKED FOR OUR SUPPORT FOR THEIR MILITARY PLANS. ANY TIE-IN BETWEEN OUR QUID AND THE SELF DEFENSE FORCE WOULD HAVE TO BE BASED ON BRITISH ASSUMPTION THAT COMPLETE FINANCING FOR THE FORCE IS THE GCOB'S MAIN OBJECTIVE FROM THE BASE QUID. THEY HAVE NEVER RESPONDED TO THE 1973 SECURITY SURVEY USG DID FOR THEM AND HAVE ASKED US ONLY FOR ECONOMIC RESOURCES CONSISTENT WITH THE VALUE OF OUR BASES AND WITH A REASONABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR ECONOMIC NEEDS. AND THAT IS WHAT WE SHOULD ARGUE OUR QUID DOES.

7. FINALLY, IN TERMS OF U.S. INTERESTS, THERE IS THE QUESTION OF HOW VALUABLE TO THE U.S. ARE THE FACILITIES LOCATED IN THE BAHAMAS. CLEARLY AUTEC IS THE KEY AND DOD BEST ABLE TO MAKE THE ASSESSMENT. WHILE THE TACTICS OF GETTING THE BEST POSSIBLE DEAL IS ONE WE CAN, HAVE AND SHOULD CONTINUE TO DISCUSS, I BELIEVE OUR FRIENDS IN DOD

MUST BE COMPLETELY CANDID WITH THEMSELVES AND WITH US AS TO WHAT THE FACILITIES ARE WORTH. GIVEN THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF BAHAMIAN NEGOTIATING TACTICS, AND CONSIDERING THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF ATEC, I WOULD HOPE THAT THE ASSESSMENT WOULD COME FROM THE TOP IN DOD. THE NOTION THAT APPROXIMATELY SIX MILLION IS THE FIGURE BUT THAT IF THE BAHAMIANS BALK DEFENSE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A FURTHER LOOK IS, IN RETROSPECT, UNPERSUASIVE. I HAVE ALREADY SUGGESTED WE START BY OFFERING NO MORE THAN \$5 MILLION (BASED ON THE DOD FIGURE OF \$6 MILLION). BUT IF THE TRUE VALUE OF THE
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BASE IS TWICE 6, WE OUGHT TO KNOW THAT IN ADVANCE AND FACTOR IT INTO OUR NEGOTIATING APPROACH. ON ONE POINT I QUITE AGREE WITH THE BRITISH. IF IN FACT WE ARE EVENTUALLY GOING TO MEET SUBSTANTIALLY THE BAHAMIAN PRICE, OR AT LEAST ARE IN REALITY WILLING TO GO FAR BEYOND OUR PRESENT LEVEL, WE ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION WITH LESS RESIDUAL ILL WILL IF OUR INITIAL OFFER IS MORE GENEROUS AND CLOSER TO THE REAL VALUE OF THE BASES TO US. ALTERNATIVELY IF, PROJECTED OVER THE NEXT 15 TO 20 YEARS, THE COST OF RELOCATING THE BASES, INCLUDING ATEC, AND TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT ADEQUATE BUT LESS OPTIMUM FACILITIES WOULD RESULT, SUGGEST WE SHOULD GO NO HIGHER THAN \$6 MILLION, THEN I WANT TO BE ABLE TO TELL THE BAHAMIANS THAT THIS IS AN HONEST COST-EFFECTIVENESS CALCULATION AND MEAN IT. THEY ARE CERTAIN TO BE SKEPTICAL BUT WE NEED TO SOUND CONVINCING BECAUSE WE ARE OURSELVES CONVINCED. THIS WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DO IF WE KNOW THAT WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, IF THE BAHAMIANS ARE ADAMANT IN THEIR RESISTANCE, THE U.S. POSITION WILL COLLAPSE IN A RUSH TO UP THE ANTE. THIS IS BAD NEGOTIATING TACTICS AND IN THE LONG RUN DEMEANS OUR NATION IN BAHAMIAN EYES. FURTHER, IT WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT OUR PROSPECTS FOR REASONABLE AGREEMENTS ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION.

8. DESPITE ALL THE FOREGOING, MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT: THIS AMBASSADOR IS NO MASOCHIST. I DO NOT RELISH A TOUGH DEBATE WITH A BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT WHOSE QUID EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN DEMONSTRATED TO BE GROSSLY UNREALISTIC AND WHOSE RESISTANCE TO AGREEMENT, WHEN IT SERVES WHAT IT VIEWS AS ITS PURPOSE, CAN BE FORMIDABLE. (I REFER, OF COURSE, TO THE LOBSTER NEGOTIATIONS.) SO, IF WASHINGTON HAS A LARGESS WHICH WILL MAKE THE JOB EASY, FAR BE IT FROM ME TO DISCOURAGE SUCH GENEROSITY. STILL, FOR THE REASONS I HAVE STATED, I WOULD THINK IT A MISTAKE TO BOW TO BRITISH ASSESSMENTS OF BAHAMIAN EXPECTATIONS, HOWEVER RIGHT THEY MAY BE, IF IN PRINCIPLE THOSE EXPECTATIONS OUGHT NOT TO BE MET AND IF AS A PRACTICAL MATTER IN THE LAST ANALYSIS THEY NEED NOT BE MET. AND IN BALANCE, IT IS WELL TO KEEP IN MIND WE AREN'T

DEALING WPTH THE LOBSTER PROBLEM, THAT THE BAHAMIANS
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GENUINELY PROFIT FROM OUR CONTINUED PRESENCE HERE,
THAT THEY WILL LOSE GREATLY IF WE LEAVE AND THAT THE OFFER
WE DISCUSSED LAST WEEK (NOT TO MENTION HOW IT MAY BE
SUPPLEMENTED BY THE REVIEW WHICH OUR COLLEAGUES IN DOD
ARE NOT CONDUCTING) IS NOT AFTER ALL TOTALLY LACKING IN
GENEROSITY. AFTER WE HAVE THE RESULTS OF THAT DOD REVIEW,
YOU WILL OF COURSE HAVE THE BENEFITS OF OUR COMMENTS
THEREON AND IN ADDITION WE WILL OFFER AN EXPLICIT
PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE GCOB LETTERS TO ME OF
AUGUST 15 AND SEPTEMBER 25, 1975. WEISS UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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